

# First records of Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni* in Ivory Coast

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La capture au filet de deux pics à queue dorée *Campethera abingoni* en février 1995 et l'observation d'un autre individu au sud-ouest du parc national de Comoé en Mars 1998 constituent les premières données de l'espèce en Côte d'Ivoire. Ces éléments, ajoutés à de données antérieures sur le pic à queue dorée en Afrique de l'Ouest, aux connaissances acquises sur son mode de répartition et ses moeurs discrètes, conduisent les auteurs à supposer que cette espèce est sans doute plus abondante en Afrique de l'Ouest qu'on ne le pensait tout d'abord.

**G**olden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni* principally occurs in northern and central parts of southern Africa<sup>1,11,16</sup>. It inhabits most woodland types and forest edge. In more open areas, eg wooded grassland, it prefers the vicinity of rivers but always keeps to areas of dense trees and thickets, and riparian forests. It may also forage in dense but isolated trees within grasslands<sup>1,13,16</sup>.

In West Africa, the species' distribution appears highly disjunct<sup>1,13,16</sup>. It has been recorded in Senegambia<sup>2,5,9,12</sup>, south-west Mali<sup>2,13</sup> and northern Guinea<sup>2,11</sup> but, apart from single reports in Ghana<sup>2,7,8</sup> and Bénin<sup>2,6</sup>, it is apparently absent between there and the northern Central African Republic. It reappears in southern Sudan and the adjacent north-east Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaïre) and north-west Uganda. According to existing lists<sup>1,15</sup> the species has not been recorded in Ivory Coast.

## New records in Ivory Coast

During studies in south-west Comoé National Park in the north-east of the country from 1994–1998, we twice recorded Golden-tailed Woodpecker. On both occasions, the species was recorded in open Guinea-Savannah habitat near riparian forest fringing the Comoé river.

On 15 February 1995, an adult male (Fig. 1) was mist-netted near the junction of the Kongo and Comoé rivers, at 08° 48'N 03° 46'W. It was identified according to the following features: greenish upperparts with yellowish spotting or streaking, whitish underparts with heavy blackish streaks and blotches, especially on the throat and breast. The bird also had a short white supercilium, blackish streaked ear-coverts and a pale line above the moustachial stripe. The reddish forehead, crown and nape and the reddish moustachial stripe with blackish feather bases are characteristic of adult males<sup>1,13,16</sup>.

The second individual (Fig. 2) was caught while mist-netting at 08° 45'N 03° 49'W, on 6 March 1998. It had the same characteristic features of the species as the bird described above. It was identified as a female or juvenile, because of its white-spotted black forehead, crown and moustachial stripe<sup>1,13,16</sup>. The eye inclined more to dark brown than



Figure 1. Male Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni*, probably subspecies *chrysur*, Comoé National Park, Ivory Coast, 15 February 1995 (Volker Salewski)



Figure 2. Female or juvenile Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni*, probably subspecies *chrysur*, Comoé National Park, Ivory Coast, 6 March 1998 (Karl H. Falk)

reddish in coloration, suggesting that it was juvenile<sup>4,13</sup>.

Another female or juvenile was observed several days later in March 1998, in the same area of savannah as the first record, searching for food in a tree. It was identified according to its greenish spotted upperparts and heavily streaked underparts, which distinguished it from all other similar woodpecker species in the area<sup>16</sup>.

The blackish streaked ear-coverts<sup>4,16</sup> and the more delicately spotted upperparts<sup>16</sup> of the birds described here suggest that they were of the subspecies *C. a. chrysurus*, which occurs, disjunctly, from Senegal to westernmost Uganda<sup>4,16</sup>.

## Discussion

These records of Golden-tailed Woodpecker are the first records in Ivory Coast<sup>1,15</sup> and Comoé National Park<sup>3</sup>, and suggest that the species may occur more continuously than previously supposed through West Africa. It may be more abundant in this region than previously considered and may also occur within the large gaps between Senegambia / Guinea, the Central African Republic and southern Sudan. *C. a. chrysurus*, as noted above, appears to be very patchily distributed throughout much of its range. The species is reported to be rather inconspicuous and unobtrusive, keeping to dense vegetation and remaining hidden in one place for long periods<sup>4,16</sup>. Furthermore, ornithological activity in West Africa is significantly lower than in East and southern Africa. Thus, Golden-tailed Woodpecker may have been overlooked in several parts of the region.

No information concerning breeding is available from West Africa, with the exception of one report from The Gambia<sup>2,5,12</sup>. If the bird we caught in March 1998 was a juvenile, it would suggest that the species probably breeds in Comoé National Park.

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